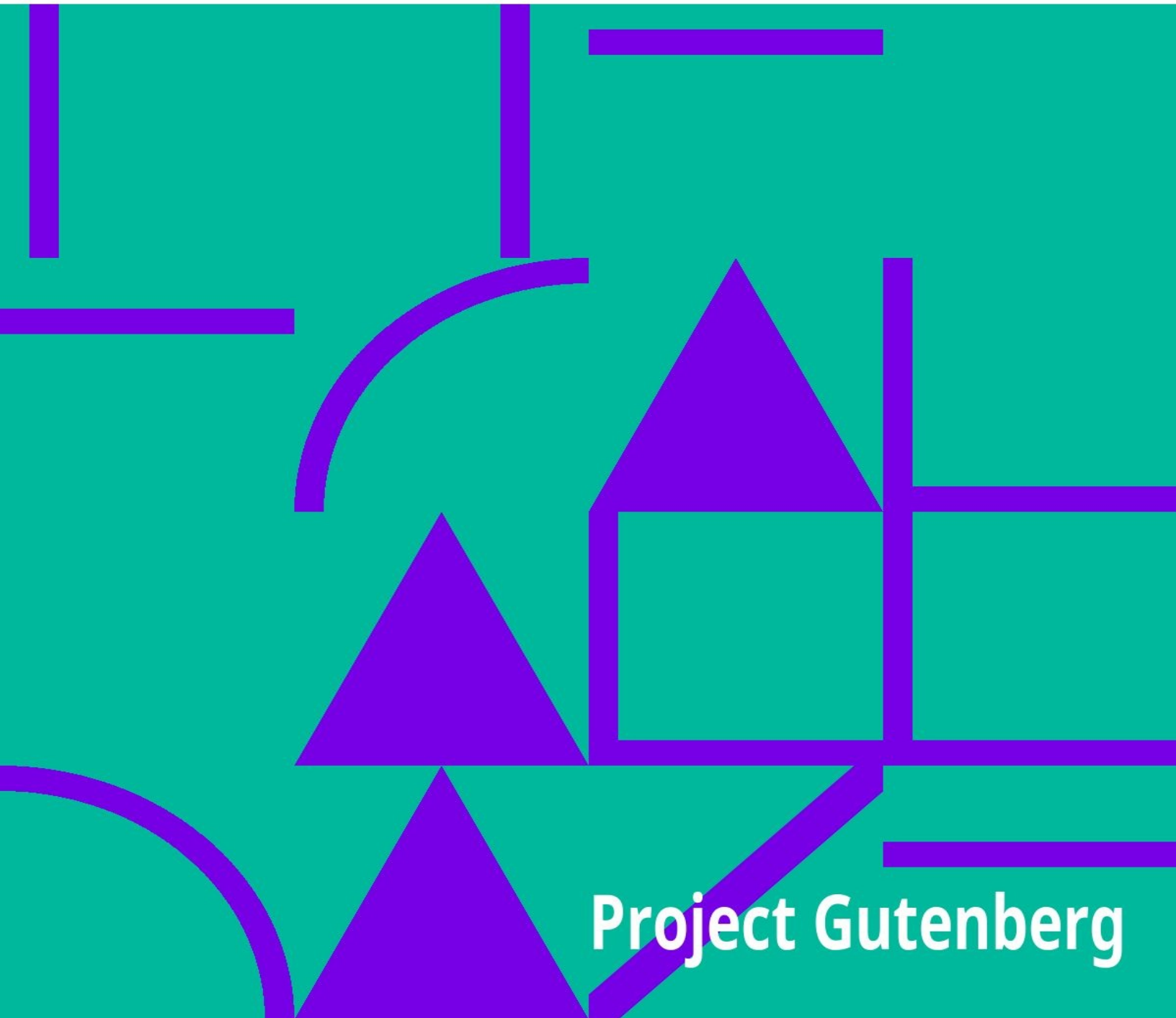
The Dual Alliance

Marjorie Benton Cooke



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Author: Marjorie Benton Cooke

Illustrator: Mary Greene Blumenschein

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The dual alliance

Marjorie Benton Cooke

The Dual Alliance

BOOKS BY

THE SAME AUTHOR

Bambi

David

The Girl Who Lived in the Woods

"But I—I hardly know you"
"But I—I hardly know you"

THE DUAL

ALLIANCE

BY

MARJORIE

BENTON COOKE

ILLUSTRATED

BY

MARY GREENE

BLUMENSCHEIN

GARDEN CITY

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ILLUSTRATIONS

PROLOGUE

Barbara Garratry was thirty and Irish. To the casual observer the world was a bright coloured ball for her tossing. When she was a tiny mite her father had dubbed her "Bob, Son of Battle," because of certain obvious, warlike traits of character, and "Bob" Garratry she had been ever since.

She had literally fought her way to the top, handicapped by poverty, very little education, the responsibility of an invalid and dependent father. She had been forced to make all her own opportunities, but at thirty she was riding the shoulders of the witch success.

Her mother, having endowed her only child with the gift of a happy heart, went on her singing way into Paradise when Bob was three. Her father, handsome ne'er-do-well that he was, made a poor and intermittent living for them until the girl was fifteen. Then poor health overtook him, and Bob took the helm.

At fifteen she worked on a newspaper, and discovered she had a picturesque talent for words. Literary ambition gripped her, a desire to make permanent use of the dramatic elements which she uncovered in her rounds of assignments. She had a nose for news and made a fair success, until she took to sitting up at night to write "real stuff" as she called it. Her nervous, high-strung temperament would not stand the strain, so, true to her Irish blood, she gave up the newspaper job, with its Saturday night pay envelope, and threw herself headlong into the uncharted sea of authorship.

She began with short stories for magazines. Editors admitted her, responded to her personality—returned her tales. "If you could write the way you talk," they all said. Now Daddy Garratry had to eat, no matter how light she could go on rations, so she abandoned literature shortly for a position in a decorator's shop. Here, too, she found charm an asset. She worked eight hours a day, cooked for two of them, washed, sewed, took care of her invalid, lavished herself upon him, then wrote at night, undaunted by her first failure.

She used her brain on the problem of success. When the manager of the shop put her in charge of their booth at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition, because, as he said, "you can attract people," she recalled the consensus of editorial opinion, and made up her mind that personality was her real gift. The stage was the show

window for that possession, so thither she turned her face at eighteen, and in due course of time joined the great army which follows the mirage of stage success.

But Bob proved to be one of the god's anointed, and from the first the charm of her, her queer, haunting face, which some found ugly and some proclaimed beautiful, marked her for advance. She was radiantly happy in the work, and happier still that she was able to provide more comforts and luxuries for daddy, who was her idol. The real crux of her ambition was the day when she could give him everything his luxury-loving heart desired.

She worked hard, she learned the trade of the theatre. She studied her audiences, noted their likes and dislikes, what they laughed at, and when they wept. Then once again she took up her abandoned pen and began to work on a play. She and daddy talked it, played it, mulled it over every waking hour for months. Then one historic day Bob read it to an audience of daddy and a manager—that was the beginning of the last lap of the race. The manager accepted it and left father and daughter in a state of ecstasy.

"Well, dad, it looks like the real thing this time."

"It does, Bobsie. Ye're not only the prettiest Garratry, but ye're the smartest of the clan!"

"Blarney!"

"I wish yer mither could see ye the day. Ye were such a queer mite, but smart—ye were always smart——"

"What'll I buy ye with our fortune, daddy? A farm in the ould counthry and little pigs——"

"No pigs for me! I'd like me a body servant in brass buttons to wait on me noight an' day. Whin I come down our marble stairs, I want to see him sthandin' there, attintion, so I can say, 'Jimmy—there's yer valley.'"

"You funny old dad! What else? We'll get us a motor car——"

"Shure, an' a counthry place—but no pigs——"

"How about a yacht?"

"We'll sthay on land, mavourneen, 'tis safer."

"But we must go to Europe, cabin de luxe——"

"I don't care if it's de luxe, if it's D-comfortable," he laughed.

This was the beginning of a wonderful game of make-believe, which they played for months. Bob's comedy went into rehearsal at once, and every day when she came home, after hours spent in the theatre, she found daddy laughing over some new scheme he had devised for spending their fortune, when it came. They planned like magii with the magic carpet in their hands, ready to spread before them.

They worked out tours of Europe, they built and rebuilt their country house. They endowed charities for newspaper writers and interior decorators—they planned a retreat for indigent magazine writers and an asylum for editors. Life was a joyous thing, stretching out ahead of them, full of colour and success, and then, on the very eve of the production of Bob's play, daddy died. Bob went through it all, the first night and what came after, like a wraith. The adulation and the praise that came to her were ashes instead of fire.

Six years followed of success. Money, travel, friends, the love and admiration of great audiences came to her, but Bob found life stale. Lovers came a-plenty; she made them friends and kept them, or sent them on their way. Bob had everything the world's wife wants, and in her own heart she knew she had nothing. Generosity was her vice. Anybody in her profession, or out of it, who was in trouble, had only to go to Bob Garratry for comfort or for cash. There was usually a tired, discouraged girl recuperating out at Bob's bungalow, and in the summertime all the stage children she could find came to pay her visits and live on real milk and eggs.

She interested herself in the girl student colonies in New York, and became their patron saint. She found that the girls in the Three Arts Club, and kindred student places—getting their musical and dramatic education with great sacrifice usually, either to their parents or themselves—had only such opportunities to hear the great artists of the day as the top galleries afforded. The dramatic students fared better than the others, she found, for they could get seats for twenty-five or fifty cents in the lofts of theatres, but the music students had to stand in line sometimes for two or three hours to buy a place in the gallery of the Metropolitan. As it was impossible to see anything from there, seated, they were accustomed to stand through the entire opera. For this privilege they paid one dollar. Bob learned what that dollar meant to most of them, an actual sacrifice,

even privation. While rich patrons yawned below, these young idealists, the musical and dramatic hope of our future, leaned over the railing, up under the roof, trying to grasp the fine shades of expression which mark the finished artist.

All this Bob Garratry learned, and raged at. She herself donated twenty-five student seats for every opera, and a lesser number for each good play. She interested some of her friends in the idea—with characteristic fervour she adopted all the students in New York, but even this large family did not fill the nooks and crannies of her empty heart. You felt it in her work—"the Celtic minor" as one critic said. Possibly Paul Trent expressed it best when he said: "Behind her every laugh you feel her dreein' her weird!"

PART I

"Mr. Trent, Miss Garratry is on the wire," said the stenographer to Trent, who sat at his desk making inroads on the piles of correspondence, official documents, and typewritten evidence which heaped his desk.

"I told you I couldn't be interrupted," he replied sharply.

"I explained that to her, when she called the first time. She says that if you don't speak to her she will come down here."

He smiled reluctantly as he took up the receiver. "Good morning," he said.

"What is the use of having a lawyer, if he acts like a Broadway manager?" she asked.

"I wish you could see the pile of papers completely surrounding me," he answered.

"I'm not interested in your troubles, I want mine attended to."

"Entirely feminine."

"Yes, it is selfish——"

"I said feminine."

"I heard you. I want you to lunch with me at two."

"I cannot possibly do it," he interrupted her.

"It isn't social, it is business, and it must be attended to to-day."

"I'm sorry, but——"

"Mr. Trent, I assure you it is a matter of serious importance. I feel justified in insisting upon your professional attention for one hour to-day. If you prefer, I will come to you."

Trent's face showed his annoyance.

"I cannot take time for lunch. I'll be there at three."

"Thank you."

He hung up the receiver impatiently and returned to his work. A few minutes before three he set out for the hotel where Barbara Garratry lived. He was annoyed at himself for coming—probably some foolishness which could just as well be attended to over the telephone. He knew the actress only slightly.

He had acted as her attorney in one or two minor cases when she needed legal help. He had found her sensible and intelligent—for a woman. Susceptible to beauty, he had felt her charm, and even promised himself that some day he would take time to know her. She interested him, because all successful people interested him. It was his only measure. At forty he found himself envied by men, his seniors in his profession. He had served as State's attorney, he was on the eve of trying for a bigger prize, but to-day, as he made his way along the crowded street, in answer to Barbara Garratry's summons, his mood was a bit cynical. Life held no locked doors for him—he had peered behind them all, as Father Confessor. Men he found open books, women, thin volumes not worth the reading. To-day he had a sense of isolation from his fellows, a wave of loneliness, almost futility. This "average man," who passed him on the street, had his home, his wife, and children to match with Trent's "bigger issues."

He was invited to Miss Garratry's sitting-room at once. Her maid admitted him, and she came to greet him. He was struck again with a certain poignant quality in her, although her smile was merry.

"I know how furious you are at having to come."

"On the contrary, I am honoured."

"You are unremittingly courteous, considering that you are you."

"Which means?"

"I know in what poor esteem you hold women," she smiled.

"You do me a great injustice," he began.

"You do yourself one," she interrupted. "We're not so bad. However, the fact that we interest you so little makes it possible for you to do me a service."

"I am glad."

She waved him to a seat, and as she crossed the room he found himself wondering whether her floating gown was blue or violet or both. The primroses at her belt gave him pleasure. She gathered up some papers and laid them before him.

"I wish to make my will. This is a list of my possessions and the distribution I wish made of them."

He looked over the list, his eye appraising with surprise her investments.

"You have been very successful."

"Yes."

"You wish me to have this typed, signed, witnessed, and filed with your other papers?"

"If you please. I wish my body cremated and the ashes thrown into the sea," she added quietly.

He glanced at her quickly.

"You are ill? You are afraid of death?"

"Afraid of death? No, I am seeking it."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean I do not wish to live any more— I'm tired."

He looked about him at the charming, flower-scented room, at the vibrant figure of the girl.

"You mean you intend to end it—deliberately?"

"Yes. Why not? There is not a living soul dependent on me to be affected by my going."

"You don't think it's cowardice?"

"I'm brave enough to be a coward. I've fought my way through and over every obstacle—even you say I've been successful. Now I'm tired— I've got nothing to fight for, I'm Irish, and I'm lonesome."

"But you're just at the top, ready to enjoy what you've fought for."

"There's nothing in that. It's only the fight that counts."

He understood that.

"Why don't you marry, or have you?"

"No, I have not. I don't want money or position. I can't marry a man who loves me when I'm only fond of him. I'd rather marry a stranger."

"What made you begin the fight?"

"I wanted things for daddy, and he died just before I won out."

"Why don't you interest yourself in some cause? Women nowadays are——"

"Suffrage or charity? The Irish are never satisfied with causes, man——"

"There's Home Rule," he smiled.

"The women have it," she retorted.

"But it's ridiculous! Why, you've got everything in the world."

"Do you think that?" she challenged him directly.

He walked over to the window and looked out at the early winter sunset. Presently he came back and faced her.

"No," he answered.

She nodded.

"I've thought it all out. I think I have the right. I'm at the top of my wave now, I don't want to sink slowly down into the trough of old age and mediocrity. I'm going."

"When?"

She laughed.

"Oh, the day of execution isn't set. I want to get my house in order."

"How are you going?"

"I don't know. They're all rather ugly. I wanted you to have directions. I want you sent for."

"Why did you select me?" curiously.

"Because I thought you would understand."

He walked up and down the room, his tall head bent, his eyes on the floor. She watched him absently, her mind far away. He roused her by stopping before her.

"I do understand. I offer no opposition. You're of age, you know what you want. I make you a counter proposition. We will call a taxi, go to the courthouse, get a license and be married. We will spend six months together, as partners only. We each go on with our own work, but we share our problems and our pleasures. At the end of the six months, if you still want to go, I'll help you."

She stared at him, utterly aghast.

"But I—I hardly know you!"

"You said you'd rather marry a stranger than a man you were merely fond of—so would I. I've felt this loneliness you speak of. I'd like to make this experiment. We are neither of us handicapped by sentiment—we start even."

"But you don't like me—much."

"Enough. As well as you like me. You're a good gambler. Get your hat and come along."

"Six months! What difference will it make in a thousand years?" she questioned.

"None."

She stood on tiptoe, her two hands on his shoulders, and looked long into his eyes. He looked into hers frankly. In the end she nodded, went into the other room, came back at once, in hat and furs.

"It's a new kind of suicide," she smiled, "come on."

II

In the cab a sort of terror of this madness came upon Bob. She glanced at this strange man beside her as if she had never seen him before. His handsome, aquiline profile was toward her as he gazed at the crowds passing. What was in his mind? Was he, too, longing to run?

"It's getting colder. People are scurrying," he said casually. She steadied at his calm tone. A new courage, a new sense of adventure began to stir in her.

They said very little on the drive; in fact, except for necessary questions they were almost entirely silent until they walked out of the courthouse, man and wife. Trent put her into the cab, gave an order, and got in after her. She looked at him intently: so much depended on these first few minutes.

"Well, partner," he smiled, and took her gloved hand in a firm clasp for a minute. Her sigh of relief made him smile again, and then they both laughed. "I told him to go to my apartment. We'll make some tea and I'll pack a bag. I'd better join you at the hotel."

"Your apartment is too——"

"You couldn't be comfortable there with your maid."

They disembarked at his quarters, and Bob made a tour of inspection.

She hoped for an intimate glance into the man's personality, but the rooms were as impersonal as he was. Just books and pipes and man-litter.

She made the tea while he packed his things.

"Aren't you sorry to leave this?" she asked him.

"Well, you can't have your cake and eat it. Every experiment has some disadvantages," he laughed.

"When my season closes I'll keep house for you. I'm good at it."

"Thank the Lord for that!"

"No, I won't drag you over the 'well-known continent of Europe' for three months," she laughed, and he nodded gratefully. "I have a little place up in the hills where I go in the summer."

"So have I."

"Well, how will we manage it?"

"Fifty-fifty," said he. "Half at yours and half at mine."

They drank their tea and put away the things. When they were ready to go, Bob

said, "I like this man-place."

"We'll come here when you're tired of your girly-girly garden."

They went to the hotel and announced their marriage to the manager and the clerk. Trent looked at a suite adjoining Barbara's.

"It's all right. I'll send my things up to-morrow. Now you go and rest. What am I to call you?"

"Everybody calls me Bob."

"Then I'll say Barbara. Do you want to dine upstairs or in the restaurant?"

"Restaurant," quickly.

His swift glance brought explanation.

"You embarrass me a little—yet. I have to get used to you, and the restaurant seems less—intimate."

He nodded, smiling.

"When do you go to the theatre?"

"Seven o'clock. Are you coming?"

"Certainly."

"Dinner at six-fifteen. You'll hate that, won't you?"

"There may be compensations," dryly. He held the door open for her, between the two suites. "Oh, bother that boy, he carried off the key to this door," he added.

"We don't need it," she said.

"Thank you," he bowed.

Dinner was hurried and unsatisfactory. For the most part they were silent. Bob needed her reserves for the night's work, and deliberately set herself against the impulse to entertain him. He talked to her, as they drove to the theatre, so quietly and casually, that she knew she had dreamed it all—that he would go out of her life at the stage door.

"Coming around later?" she asked.

"Yes."

She nodded and disappeared. When half an hour later she darted out on the stage before an enraptured audience, he found himself a part of the mob spirit which acclaimed her. Her charm was irresistible. He felt her as an artist, not as a woman, but she moved him keenly by her masterly performance. As the audience filed out he went into a nearby florist and bought the entire stock of Killarney roses. He carried them to her dressing-room, and when the maid admitted him, he dropped the mass in her lap.

"For a wild Irish rose," said he.

"Faith, little sisters, he's an Irishman himself," she laughed, burying her face in the bloom.

They were interrupted by the manager, people to see her on various pretexts. Trent was driven into the ugly corridor. He was for the first time somewhat irritated by the situation. Appendage to a star! Had he for once in his carefully planned life completely lost his head, and risked everything on a wild gamble? When she came toward him, ready for the street, he pulled himself together.

"Where shall we go? Do you mind the cafés?"

"People stare so, I seldom go. But it is all right to-night, if you do not mind that."

"Let's go to the Persian Garden and dance."

"All right."

Trent had never been in any public place with her, and he was totally unprepared for the effect she produced. As they followed the head waiter to a table, a noticeable whisper ran round the room, then silence. Then a youth, who had courage as well as champagne aboard, rose and lifted his glass.

"On your feet, all of you! To Bob, God bless her!"

With laughter everybody responded. Trent, slightly amused, secretly annoyed, watched Bob's expression. First astonishment, then concern for him, then genuine pleasure. They were not yet seated, so she lifted an imaginary glass to them.

"Thank you, friends. Here's to a short life and a merry one for us all!"

Applause greeted her, and as they took their seats she turned to Trent impulsively.

"I'm so sorry," she said; "you hate it, of course, but don't. It's only because they really love me."

"Suppose we don't try to explain things to each other, my lady."

The music began, and he rose and held out his hand to her. She had not danced with him before, so when he swung her away with the ease of a master, she had a sense of surprised pleasure before she gave herself up to the joy of it.

"I'd never have thought it of you, Paul," she said, as they took their seats. He laughed and lifted his glass.

"To the partnership!"

They drank to it gravely. Later when Paul unlocked her door for her, and turned to go on to his, she said: "Come in and talk over the party."

"Aren't you tired?"

"No. I feel as if I'd never sleep. I wish I were going on this minute, to play a new part before a Boston audience, on a rainy first night."

"That would call forth all your powers," he laughed, and followed her in. As she pulled the cord of the last lamp, she felt his eyes on her.

"Well, what do you think of me?" she challenged him.

"I think you are an inspired artist and a beautiful woman," he evaded.

She laughed at that.

"That must be an old joke," he objected.

"The whole thing is exquisitely funny: a strange man in my rooms at two in the morning compliments me on my art.... What do you want of life?" she added disconcertingly.

His tongue shaped itself in an evasive reply, but the frank, boyish interest in her face changed his mind.

"I want several things: One of them is to be governor of New York."

"Good! I like people to know what they want and go after it."

"It isn't so easy, you know."

"All the better."

"Do you know anything about politics?"

"Lord, man, I'm Irish."

She led him on to talk of the situation in the political game, to line up for her his allies and enemies; to outline his campaign policy. His candidacy was to be announced in a few days. She leapt at the points in advance of him, questioned this and that—he talked to her as to a lieutenant. The clock chimed and caught his attention.

"Good heavens! why didn't you send me home?"

"What's the use of sleeping when there's something to talk about—when there's a fight to plan for."

"But my work must not interfere with your work." He came to shake hands with her. "It looks as if this partnership might prove a success."

"I'm no prophet!" she defied him.

Just before he closed the door he spoke:

"But the election would not be until next fall——"

"We could extend our contract," she retorted, and the door closed on his laugh.

PART II

It seems sometimes as if a Harlequin rules the world. When once your tired eyes rest on what you know to be the last trick in his bag—lo! he turns the empty sack upside down, and it spills surprises, like the widow's cruse. Some such master jest he played on Barbara.

An absorbing interest had catapulted into her life, and wakened her like a bugle call. She had a fight on her hands and that means life to the Irish. Her extraordinary marriage made little real difference in the order of her days, except that she dined with an interesting man each night. He talked to her of the things he hoped to do, if the people of New York made him governor.

Always, except when political dinners or party caucus kept him too late, she found him pacing the corridor outside her dressing-room. Courteous, urbane, he took her to supper with friends, to a café, or back to the hotel, where they had something to eat in Bob's sitting-room. This last arrangement suited her best, for then she could lead him to talk of the fight ahead. He sometimes asked her judgment. She felt his single-purposed strength in these talks; she plumbed the force which had made him a success at forty.

"Why do you always make me talk about myself?" he asked her on one of these occasions of supper in her room.

"I want you to be interested," she retorted.

"You think me such an egotist?"

"I think all successful people are egotists. Success isn't an accident, it is plan and work. You have to focus in on yourself all the time to belong to the master-class."

"You don't talk about yourself—you're a success."

"Oh, we'll come to me. It's all 'quiet along the Potomac' with me just now, but you're going into action."

"Think of the egotists who are not a success."

"Well, of course, a man who is merely in love with himself is in danger of a mésalliance," she added, laughing.

"Go on! What is the saving grace for your egotists?"

"I hate to be so bromidic."

"I'm used to it."

"Oh!"

"Not in you—the rest of the world."

"New York nearly lost a governor!" she warned him. "I save my egotist with a sense of humour, which is only a sense of proportion. Humour plus purpose."

"What kind of purpose?"

"To be selfish for unselfish ends."

"Delightfully Irish," he admitted.

The talk never drifted from the impersonal. They both unconsciously fought to keep up all the barriers of their formal relationship, but they both were constantly peering over the wall into the other's personality, hoping not to be caught at it.

The day came when Trent's candidacy for governor was announced by his party. As he never saw Bob in the morning, the news came to her with her coffee and toast. She sent for all the papers and read them more diligently than she had ever searched for notices of her own triumphs. The bed looked like a sea of print, out of which she rose, a pink mermaid. When the last word was read, she took up the 'phone beside her bed and called Paul. The secretary told her he was in a conference. She asked if there was a message.

"This is— I am—Mrs. Trent," said Barbara, blushing furiously at her end of the line.

"Oh, just a minute," amended the girl. After a bit she heard his crisp, short greeting.

"Good-morning! This is Bob."

"How are you?"

"I've read every line in every paper. I'm so excited I had to call up. Could I do something—make a speech, or something like that?"

"Wish you might— I'd be nominated sure."

She resented his flippancy, she was so in earnest.

"I won't keep you; I know you're busy, Governor."

"I'll take that as a prophecy. By the way, I may not be able to dine with you to-night."

"Sorry! Good-bye."

He frowned at her abrupt dismissal as he went back to work, then he forgot all about her. Bob set down the steel bar smartly. For some reason she was irritated at the interview. She had expressed herself with such emotion, and he had received it with such cool matter of factness. She treated herself to a mental shaking, which Englished might have read thus:

"Look here, Barbara Garratry, this man is nothing to you but an interesting interlude between Now and the Hereafter. He asked you to marry him as an experiment. He laid stress on a lack of sentiment. Now don't you let your Irish feelings clutter things up. You fight for the fight's sake and leave the man out of it."

She arose with much determination. She dressed and outlined a play to be called "The Governor." She read the noon editions. She put in a busy afternoon, disciplining her mind to keep away from the danger-zone, and as punishment she went to dine with some friends, so that she might miss the chance of seeing him, if he did come back to dine.

Paul, in the meantime, worked like five men all day, with the unformed idea in the back of his brain that there was something he must do at seven o'clock. He was to speak at the Waldorf at eight, after a political dinner. The last conference was over a few minutes before seven. The unformed thought crystalized—he wanted to talk to Bob. It would rest him more than anything. He called a taxi and hurried to the hotel. He glowed with satisfaction at the thought of her, there, waiting for him. He laughed at himself and dashed to her door like an eager boy. The maid told him she had gone out to dine, and his disappointment was all out of proportion to the facts, as he told himself on his way to his room.

Why shouldn't she go out to dinner? Just because this night was an important one to him was no reason why it should be to her. He was a man she had married for an experiment. He must not let her woman-lure get between him and his purpose. It was an older, grim-faced candidate for governor who went to the Waldorf an hour later.

Bob's performance dragged that night. She had exhausted herself in forced gaiety at the dinner and she was furious at herself. When her maid reported Paul's appearance at her door, she denied to herself the wave of regret that swept over her.

A party of friends came back after the play to carry her off for supper, but she pleaded a headache and got rid of them. She said to herself over and over as she dressed for the street, "I know he won't come to-night—he's too busy to remember." But when she stepped into the hall and looked for his tall figure, she felt a swift disappointment. She sent her maid on to the hotel alone, on some excuse, and she determined to walk herself.

It was a cold, crisp night. Broadway was a blare of light, as poignant as a din of sound. Taxis honked, policemen shouted; bareheaded women and tall-hatted men hurried to the restaurants, the maelstrom of Broadway, nearing midnight, was in full tide. Bob turned from it toward the shadowy stretch of the avenue.

The moon was clear and round, the heavens a blue plush vault. The broad shining street swept its gleaming length, with the misty lights reflecting themselves. Uptown the cathedral spires pricked the skyline, downtown was lost in grayness. Bob hesitated at the corner to buy an extra from a brass-lunged newsy, then stood an instant deciding which way to go. She wanted the solitude and calm of the night.

A click of approaching footsteps caught her attention. She looked at the man who approached, head up, hands deep in his overcoat pockets, his long stride even and swift. Something about her caught his eye and he stopped before her in alarm.

"Barbara!"

"Why, it's you," she said stupidly.

"What's happened? What are you doing here alone, at this hour?"

"Trying to decide whether to walk uptown or downtown," she laughed. He drew

her hand through his arm, and fell into step, facing uptown.

"But, my dear girl, I can't have you alone on the streets like this."

"Why don't you come after me then?"

"I was on my way—I was detained," he answered seriously.

"I was joking. I've always gone about alone since I was a child. I'm perfectly safe."

"I don't like it, just the same. Where's your maid?"

"Sent her home."

"You wanted to be alone?"

"Yes."

He slowed down.

"I don't mind you."

"That's the nicest thing you've ever said to me," he remarked.

"Do you want me to say nice things to you?"

"I haven't any objection to it," he smiled.

"Tell me about your day."

"I came to tell you about it, before the banquet, and you'd flown."

"You said you wouldn't be back. I've read all the extras up to this."

She displayed the paper, and he smiled and put it in his pocket. He related the day's events; he even repeated the main points he had made in his speech, led on by her interest.

"They're a bit afraid of me, even my friends. They think I've got the reform bug, that I'll go in for a lot of things that they think unessential."

"Well, won't you?"

"Yes, but it's good politics to keep that to yourself."

"Don't you do it! Throw down all your cards and win out on what's in your hand."

"That's your advice, is it? It might lose me the office."

"I don't believe it. It takes nerve to state your intentions and invite the party to stay in or go out. The public cares more for nerve than party, I think."

They walked and talked until the black mass of the Park blocked the way. Paul told her of the reform bills he wanted to get put through, bills that would cost him dear, because there were big vested interests in opposition. Bob listened, commented, urged him to fight on principle, not politics. They were so absorbed in themselves that the midnight crowds scattered and left the world to them.

The walk downtown was over before they realized it. The cold night air, the exercise, or something had cleared the world of all difficulties for both of them.

"I'm glad I met you," she nodded to him, as she laid her hand in his for good-night.

"It was a fine walk; but no more gallivanting alone at night—without me," he warned her.

"I make no promises and take no orders. I'm a free-lance and an anarchist. I'm agin the government."

"Not agin the Governor, I hope?"

"No such animal is dreamt of in my philosophy!" quoth she.

II

The months that followed that midnight walk were difficult ones. Trent had his law business to attend to, and endless demands were made upon his time and strength by political banquets and speechmaking. Bob felt as if she were primitive woman, tending the pot in the tent, waiting for her brave to rush in with news of war. Then she laughed at her own thoughts. A modern New York hotel was a poor substitute for a tent. She was not even of use as pot-tender, the chêf had succeeded to that profession.

Paul fell into the habit of coming for short breathing spells between appointments. He reported every move to her and they talked each one over. Her

counsel was often sure and wise. Barbara felt that he respected her intuitions, if not her judgment.

"May I come in?" he asked one day at her door. "I have half an hour before I'm due in court, and I thought you might let me have a bite of lunch here with you, in peace and quiet."

She crossed to the telephone and ordered the luncheon sent up at once.

"You look very tired, Paul. Lie down there and be quiet until the lunch comes."

He went to her couch and obeyed. His eyes closed.

"Talk to me."

She blushed for some reason, and went to throw a rug across his feet. He looked up at her smiling.

"How shall I ever catch up with you, Barbara Garratry?"

"Catch up?"

"I make unconscionable demands on your time and patience. I ask myself what possible right I have to do it, assure myself I have none, and go right on imposing on you."

"I'm glad to help—if I do. I told you I liked a fight."

"Just at this moment peace seems the only good gift desirable to me."

"Don't talk—rest."

"Your voice rests me."

"All right. Be quiet and I'll talk. I'll tell you the story of a play I'm going to do. It's called The Governor."

He opened his eyes at that.

"Yes, you suggested it to me, but you're not the hero."

"Let's hear," he said.

She outlined the situation and set the characters up before him. Her hero was to be a young ardent reform candidate for governor, visioning big things which he

could do with his power of office. The party leaders let him talk—they winked and said the reform stuff was popular with the people just now, but when they got him to Albany they'd teach him a new song. The chief contributor to his campaign fund was to be a corporation which wanted the governor's veto to a bill infringing their absolutism. They convinced the young enthusiast of their absolute sympathy with his aims, as well as their own integrity of purpose, and then he is elected and goes to Albany.

She was interrupted by the waiter with the lunch. She directed him to serve them.

"Never mind the lunch—go on with 'The Governor'!" commanded Trent.

"That's enough for this session. Come and eat your brief repast—time is nearly up."

"But what are you going to have him do when he finds out the corporation is rotten?"

While he ate his lunch he plied her with questions and objections. When he had finished, he hesitated at the door.

"Let's talk about the play to-night. I'll come after you. For this relief much thanks; it was both mental and physical."

This play, introduced as a soporific by Bob, proved a real bond. Trent became deeply interested in it, talked it, thought about it, contended fiercely over points. When Bob remarked that it was, after all, her play, and she would do with it as she saw fit, he always defended himself gravely.

He debated the necessity of the love story. It took time which might be used for preachment.

"Oh, you mere man," she exploded, "you can't go on disregarding women in this way. We're here, we've got to be admitted and considered."

"Well, but——"

"The governor's love affair will be of much more interest to an audience than the reform bills he puts through."

"Stupid cattle!"

"Of more interest to the governor, too," she added.

"Heretic! You don't believe that."

"Certainly I do."

"You think that his courting a woman and having a few children is as important as what he can do for the whole State of New York?"

She hesitated a moment, chin in hand.

"I think that in so far as a man is normal he understands the needs of the people. It's normal for a man to marry and have a family. My governor will be a bigger man, if he wins this girl in the play."

"But all that interrupts him, takes his mind off his bigger usefulness."

"The bigger the man, the bigger his usefulness. Don't you see, you've got to feed all a man's needs, or a woman's, to get the highest results?"

"Do you think everybody needs this, this food, as you call it?"

"Do I think every baby needs mother's milk?" she inquired.

"They don't all get it, and they live just the same."

"Yes, but you can never say how much stronger they would have been with it," she smiled.

"Irish sophistry," he remarked, but he found that talk recurring to him. She had phrased his own suspicion.

"I take your advice about my campaign," he said.

"So do I take yours about the play."

"But you fight every step of the way."

"That's the way the Irish show they're grateful," she laughed. But in her heart she was glad that at last her work began to interest him as much as his interested her. Of course this particular problem in the play was his own problem, so his interest was easily aroused. She saw how it rested him to forget entirely about his own work and take up this other man's difficulties.

As the hot weather came upon them they debated the wisdom of moving out of

town. Bob's season was running very late, holding on from week to week, so long as the audiences held. Trent was rushed to death. They met only for brief visits at odd hours. Even week-ends were occupied; he caught up with his correspondence on that holiday.

"You look very pale these last few days, Barbara. Do go off to your bungalow, or to mine."

"Will you come, too?"

"Whenever I can. You see how my time is eaten up. But you could motor out at night, and spend your days out in the open. Don't think of me, you go—and be comfortable."

"Do I get on your nerves?"

He hesitated a moment.

"I wonder sometimes what my nerves would have done without you. You are the only tonic they have."

"Thanks. I'll stay until my season closes, then we can decide."

He breathed a sigh which she flattered herself was relief. Two weeks later the theatre closed. The days were hot and dry. Bob was tired, and determined not to be worried about Trent, who was working to the limit of his endurance. When he came into her room the Sunday morning after her closing, she was shocked by him.

"Well, Saint Francis, you look as if you had fasted forty days and forty nights."

"I feel it—I'm all in."

"I am going to leave you to-morrow."

"What?"

"I hate to think of you dying alone—better come along."

"Where?"

"I don't know. I'd like to go to some perfectly new place."

"So would I. Is there such a thing?"

"I'd like to rough it. Camp, skies for roof, all that kind of differentness."

"Where could we go?"

"I knew some people who went to Estes Park and loved it. How about that?"

"Actual tents? You don't seem to suggest that sort of thing."

"Log cabin, cook in the open, all day in the saddle. Come on, let's go!"

"I'm nearly through with all I can do now. How long will it take you to get ready?"

"Me? Oh, a day."

"A day? Really?"

"I'll take a steamer trunk——"

"And a maid?"

"No."

"You'll go off gypsying with me alone, Barbara?"

"Yes."

"Give me directions. I'll get tickets to-morrow."

So it was decided. Barbara plunged into dismantling her rooms and packing her things. She dispatched the maid and many trunks to the country. The next night, when Paul came in, she stood in the midst of the denuded rooms.

"You actually did it. You Irish do put things through!" he exclaimed.

"We do. Get the tickets?"

"I did, and wired the ranchman. We go on the Century to Chicago."

"Good!"

"You're not afraid of this new experiment?"

"Which one?"

"Going off alone into the wilderness with me. We will be dependent on each

other. No little 'convenances' in the woods, you know."

"I'm not afraid. I'd go alone with my maid, and you would be some protection."

He laughed, but not too readily.

They set out next day, both too tired for any sense of adventure. Bob had the drawing-room, and Paul wandered in and out, interrupting her reading. The trip west, beyond Chicago, was uneventful and hot. It was only when they arrived at Loveland, where they took the motor into the Park, that their interest began to awaken.

The ride into Estes along the narrow roads, winding between high cliffs on one side, the roaring, foaming, booming Big Thompson River on the other—higher and higher and wilder as it winds—whipped Bob's spirits into a froth of talk and laughter. Paul was conscious of a sense of peril in her nearness, in her charm. He warned himself of the great disadvantage of being the one of them who cared. "We start even," he had said on that eventful day. "I wonder how we'll end?" he mused, looking into her vivid face.

"Odds on the Irish," she laughed, reading his thoughts. Whereupon he blushed guiltily.

III

They came into the valley itself, beyond the town of Estes, at sunset, and Bob gasped with the glory of it. A long strip of fertile green land, with the river winding across it many times, like a satin ribbon. The massive mountains of the Great Divide, snow-capped, pink-tipped, in the setting sun, stood guard over the valley like watchmen. As Paul watched Barbara's face he thought it was like a prayer of exultation.

They drew up to the long, low brown ranch house and were welcomed by the proprietor.

"Mighty glad to meet ye and have ye with us. Ye didn't say what size cabin ye wanted, but I took ye for a bride an' groom, and gave ye what the boys call the 'Bridal soot.'"

Trent laughed and assured him they were easily "suited," so the man led them down the valley, beyond all the outhouses, tents, cabins, and shacks to a log

cabin cut off from the rest by a strip of woods.

"Nobody to interfere with ye here—lonesome as the top of Mill's Mountain," remarked their host at parting.

Bob led the way about and Paul followed her. There were two rooms: one with a fireplace, intended for a sitting-room; it had a couch bed, however, and the minimum of furniture. The bedroom beyond was equally bare. A sort of shed, used by some former tenant as a kitchenette, was shut off by a low door. But out of the broad windows and the open doors was a glory that made man-made comforts seem unessential details. They made the circuit of their new domain, and laughed.

"Are you frightened?" he asked her.

"Not of this shack, nor the big mountains, nor you. It's fun."

"I can get along, of course, but you don't seem to fit."

"Wait till I get on my mountain clothes, then I'll fit. These Fifth Avenue things look so ridiculous. But you're not to fret about me, Paul. I've had plenty of roughing it. I have faced life without a bathroom before. If I'm not a good enough Roman to stand it, I'll go back east."

"Let's go engage a guide and see what horses they have for us."

They started for the corral back of the ranch house, where the ponies were grazing. They had to step off the road several times to let parties of laughing men and girls gallop past. A cowboy volunteered to bring in some ponies, and while they waited, a big, loose-jointed man sauntered over to them.

"Howdy?" said he.

"Good evening."

"Strangers, ain't ye?"

"Yes, we've just come."

"East'ners?"

"Tenderfeet from New York," laughed Bob.

"We're gettin' used to you folks out here. Purty nigh all Noo Yawk State has been

out here. Them your ponies?" he added, as the cowboy came up.

"Yes, I telegraphed to have some reserved for us."

Their new acquaintance gave the boy an order.

"I'll show ye the pony you want, Ma'am. This here one is all right fer yer man, but that old sawbuck won't do fer ye."

The cowboy came up with a fresh pony, ears back, eyes wide. He investigated the party thoroughly before he permitted Bob to rub his nose.

"You're right, Mr.—a——"

"Bill—Bill Hawkins. Sure I'm right. That's the pony fer her."

"We want to make a good many trips around here, and we'll need a guide. Could you go with us?" Paul asked.

"Yep."

"All right, we want you," said Bob.

"All ye got to do is to holler. When ye cal'clatin' to start?"

"To-morrow. Let's go for two days up that biggest one," said Bob.

"Cripes! She ain't goin' to lose no time. It'll hustle me some to git the camp outfit and the grub ready fer to-morrow."

"All right, Bill, hustle!" smiled the lady.

"Better be ready to start 'bout five o'clock. We can git breakfast up the mounting."

Trent questioned her silently and she nodded. Supper at the ranch house was poor, and on the way back to their cabin Bob announced that hereafter she and Bill Hawkins would serve meals from the kitchenette on the cabin porch.

They sat for a while on the tiny veranda, watching the dark shut down and lock in the valley. Then a new moon slid over a mountain peak into view, big yellow stars, close overhead, burst through the sky.

"My! what stars! They are like yellow coryopsis flowers leaning out of the sky garden!" exclaimed Bob.

"Shall I pick you a few to wear in your hair?"

""Twould be a pity to have them fade."

"Then I'll get you the moon."

"It's no good unless you get it for yourself, Governor."

They talked casually and comfortably for half an hour, and then Bob announced that she was going to bed, so that she might get strength to face a five o'clock rising. They groped about for the candles, and by the dim light of one Paul lighted her to the bare bedchamber.

"We'd better pack our knapsacks to-night. I'll get out the steamer rugs, too. I know you'll need one on that bunk of yours. Go see what is on it."

He reported a cotton blanket and a comfortable made of pig iron. In due course of time they got things organized, and lights were out in the cabin at nine o'clock.

Trent woke to a sound of laughter—peal after peal on the morning air. He sat up, listened, looked at his watch, sprang up and dressed. He went out around the cabin to the spot from which the laughter came, punctuated by a strange and unidentified noise. A slight boy in khaki breeches, shirt, and boots, with a wide-brimmed hat pulled down on his head, was conversing with a small gray burro, who lifted his long neck and emitted unearthly sounds, at which the boy laughed.

"If that pet belongs to you, young man, you might lead him off my premises."

"He's singing a hymn to the rising sun," said Bob, turning to him.

"My word, you are Bob sure enough now," he exclaimed.

"Comfy! No matter, you men like it."

"We certainly like it on you," he remarked in surprised admiration.

"Here's Bill," she interrupted him, as the guide rode up leading the ponies. He stared at Bob with delight.

"Got an extry boy in this party, ain't we? How many of ye is there?"

"According to my appetite there's six of me," she laughed. "I can't wait to go up any mountain before breakfast."

"Wa'al, I got to thinkin' 'bout that, and I jest made a camp up the trail 'bout a mile, and the coffee's bilin' right now. Git yer blankets and knapsacks out, and we'll strop 'em on, an' git up there before it biles over."

In ten minutes they were off after Bill, the ponies on the run. The air nipped with a touch of frost in it. The mountains stood out as clear as if they were cut out of coloured paper and pasted on the flat sky. As they neared Bill's camp the smell of coffee and bacon greeted them.

"All the perfumes of Arabia can't touch that for smell," laughed Paul.

Bill and a cowboy assistant served a breakfast that no New York hotel could surpass; the mountain air gave a zest that no hothouse fruit ever produced, as appetizer. They ate like hungry hounds, and an hour later, all packed and mounted, they said good-bye to the cowboy chêf and started on their way.

Bill rode well in advance, then Bob, then Paul. Bob's pony was a constant amusement, he was too nervous for the average, inexperienced rider, so he had not been ridden much. He had a distinct suspicion of rocks, overhanging trees, and things that darted across the road.

"He's a dancer. The equine Vernon Castle," Bob laughed, after a *pas seul* in a narrow and most inconvenient spot.

"Little too fresh. Don't you want to change with me?"

"Not I."

Sometimes the trail permitted them to ride side by side for a few minutes, and look off over the world spread below.

"It's incredible—such peace," he said, as they drew their ponies to a halt.

"That passeth understanding," she nodded.

"I suppose this sense of awe, of rest, *is* worship, *is* religion."

Barbara took a deep breath.

"Yes, it makes you feel purified."

The trail wound up and up. Every instant the view changed. There were difficulties to be met, where washouts had made the road almost impassable. It seemed only an hour or two later that they caught up with Bill, clearing a space

to make a fire and cook the lunch.

"Not lunch! Why, what time is it?" cried Bob.

"One o'clock by my watch, ten minutes since we started by my mind, and six o'clock to-night by my appetite," said Paul.

Seated on the ground, eating a thick sandwich and devouring Heinz's pickles, Barbara sighed ecstatically.

"There never was such food," said she.

"And that for your sated New York appetite!" laughed Paul.

After lunch Bill decreed a rest for man and beast. He made a couch of pine needles for Bob, threw down her blanket on it, and betook himself off with the ponies. Bob stretched out on her bed, Trent sitting beside her to smoke.

"Better take a nap," he suggested.

"Oh, I'm not at all sleepy," said she, and was off before she finished the sentence.

Trent sat, smiled, puffed, and looked off to the end of the world and back again at the sleeping girl. He lay on his back and stared up at the sky, glad of life, of health, glad, yes—he admitted it—glad of Barbara.

When Bill came back Paul laid his hand on Bob's and brought her to a sitting position, rubbing her eyes and blinking from deep sleep.

"I must have dropped off for a minute," she apologized.

"Yes, an hour or two."

"What?"

"You've been asleep for an hour."

"The divil I have! Did I miss anything?"

"A million-dollar panorama."

"Don't you let me sleep like that again, Paul Trent. I can sleep in a New York hotel to the tune of the Elevated. Did you sleep?"

"Yes."

"That helps some."

They rode through the late afternoon, when the air was like amber; through the time of the setting sun, when the world was like a glass prism of many colours; through the shadow time, when long bars of blue lay below in the valley to mark the mountains. Then, just before the red disk burned into the mountain top and disappeared, Bill announced camp for the night.

A mountain stream bounded and roared along beside the place. A hut had been set up by a logging gang, and a thick bed of hardwood chips and bark powder marked the spot where the forest giants had met their inglorious end. Bill attended to the ponies while Bob and Paul collected firewood.

Supper was a silent function—the silence of people who understand each other and need not talk. Bob smiled at Paul when their eyes met, and for the rest, they looked off over a sample of God's handiwork that made man-talk as futile as monkey chatter.

"Do ye want to sleep in the cabin, Mrs. Bob?"

They both smiled at his appropriation of her name.

"No, Bill, I want to sleep on that bank, in the tanbark beside the brook."

"It'll keep ye awake. Awful noisy critter."

"I don't care if it does. Besides, it won't. I'll pretend I'm a goldfish, and the mountain torrent is my home."

Bill grinned at that.

"Ye goin' to be a goldfish, too, Mr. Trent?"

"I'll roll up here by the fire."

"I'll take the cabin myself, then. Can ye keep awake till I clean up camp, or shall I shake down some beds now?"

"No, no, you go ahead with the housekeeping. We won't go to bed for hours," Bob answered.

She led the way up the trail a bit, Paul following.

"Bill has real tact—he's there when you want him, and only then."

"It is as near ideal as it can be," Paul assented. "You and I, and the world away," he added.

"There isn't any world—there's just earth and sky and God," said Bob softly.

"What about us?"

"We aren't us. We're blue shadows; the night will sap us up."

"No, no, I'm just beginning to be glad I'm I—to know what it means to live," he protested.

"I wonder if that is something to be glad for?" she mused.

It grew so dark that when Bill's shout reached them Paul had to grope his way down the trail first, Bob's hands on his shoulders as she came after him. Bill ordered them to turn in. They were to get an early start, and they needed sleep, because they were not broken in yet, they were still soft.

"There's a rocky bowl full of mounting water down there, where ye can wash," he said, pointing. "Here's yer bed, Mrs. Bob, and yer blankets is over there by the fire, Mr. Trent. I'll call ye in the mornin', if the sun don't git ye up."

He disappeared into the cabin, where a candle showed through the door.

"Let's go look at the bath-tub," said Bob. They clung together and made their way to the spot where the rocks made a pool. The moon was up, but the trees threw mysterious shadows across the water. Bob took a stick and plumbed it.

"He tended the fire that was between them" **"He tended the fire that was between them"**

"It isn't deep."

"No, only noisy, I think."

"Paul, I'm going in. You go off up there in that clump of trees, so I can call you, if I drown."

"You aren't going into that torrent now, in the dark!"

"Yes, I am."

"You're crazy!"

"Please let me. It's perfectly safe, and I never wanted to do anything so much in my life."

"You funny child!" he said, and walked off, according to orders.

Bob slid out of her clothes and plunged boldly into the icy torrent. She jumped

up and down and squealed, she tried to swim, she laughed up at the moon, and was back into her clothes in a jiffy. At her call Paul plunged out of the trees to the rescue.

"Lost your nerve, did you?"

"No, I've been in. It's wonderful. Now, I want a drink of brandy, and my bark bed."

He laughed, came to the rescue with a flask, and led her to the place where Bill had spread her blankets.

"Good-night, Undine Goldfish," said Paul, and left her.

Presently, wrapped in her steamer rugs, she slid into sleep, like a mermaid into the sea. About three o'clock Paul turned over to throw a log on the fire, when a small figure, dragging blankets, came into view.

"What's the matter?"

"Oh, the night is so big and there's so much sky, it scares me."

"Is the night sapping you up?"

"Yes. I want to lie near the fire and you."

"Poor kid, she wants the lights o' home. Lie here where it's warm."

So until morning she lay on one side, and Paul on the other, while he tended the fire that was between them.

PART III

All days are alike in the mountains, all days are marvellously different. It seems sometimes as if a giant hand must push the great hills into new positions and relationships. Then the sky artist makes such daring experiments in shape and colour, as no Cubist ever dreamed of. People say they tire of the mountains and prefer the sea, because it is ever changing, but no man with the seeing eye ever makes that mistake. The sea soothes or irritates, but the mountains rouse the spiritual sources of your being—they are vision makers; they stretch you to your fullest measure, if you go to them with yearning.

The second day of their first expedition they jogged back to the ranch after an early supper on the heights. Barbara went on to the main house to see if hot water could be gotten for a bath, and came back chuckling.

"The bath-tubs are in the laundry house. You get a ticket. I'm thirteen. I hope this isn't a popular hour."

When she set forth laden with towels and soap Paul laughed.

"The luxury-loving idol of Broadway makes for the distant laundry!"

"I'd walk a mile for hot water to take this soreness out of my bones. You'd better get yourself a ticket."

"Thanks, I'll go into the river."

An hour later, in a soft frilly négligé, she joined him on the tiny veranda, where he sat smoking. He rose and bowed formally.

"How did you leave New York, Madam? I'd no idea we had guests."

"I'm only stopping over night," she retorted. "Are you alone in this wilderness?"

"No, I have a boy with me named Bob—a most engaging companion. He is away this evening.... How were the laundry tubs?"

She chuckled.

"I had to do battle for mine. A man was just going into my bathroom when I

appeared. I claimed it, I presented my check as proof; he said I had forfeited my chance by being late."

"Western gallantry!"

"He was from New England, on the contrary!"

"What did you do?"

"I bowed low and quoted Sir Philip Sydney: 'Sir,' said I, 'thy need is greater than mine.'"

"Wasted, I'll warrant," laughed Trent. "Then what?"

"There was another vacant tub, so I took that and we splashed in unison, in adjoining booths. The water was hot and I feel too good to be true. How was the river?"

"Icy."

"Isn't it wonderful to feel all of yourself like this?"

"All of yourself?"

"Yes, most of the time you only feel the part of yourself that hurts. Now I feel my blood jumping in my veins, my heart pumping, my lungs expanding. I have eyes and ears in my skin. I'm using all of me."

"You've said it," he nodded appreciatively.

"Let's spend most of our time in the hills, Paul. I like it better than this, don't you?"

"Is this too domestic for you?" he teased.

"I suppose so. I don't want to be too intimate with you."

"You don't like me, on closer association?"

"I didn't say that."

"This kind of life is the ultimate test, I grant you that."

"Yes, it is. It's a good place to get acquainted." She turned her eyes on him. "I've just met you up here."

"Think you're going to like me?"

"I don't know."

"It is an awful responsibility."

"What is—liking you?"

"No, trying to make you like life well enough to stay on a while."

"I'm staying until you're elected, anyhow."

"If you should decide to stay on after that, what could I do to interest you?"

She lifted her brows in question.

"It's only the governor you're interested in—his fight, his success. I'm just the works inside his officialism."

"Like the stick inside the scarecrow," she smilingly assented.

"Exactly. Now will that scarecrow continue to interest you when he is set up in the gubernatorial field?"

"Depends on how the 'big stick' acts. I love a fight, you know."

"I see no peace ahead for me," he sighed.

"Better take it now," she said. "Look off there—peace like frozen music. Is there such a thing as a fight for governor, as Broadway, marionettes on a stage, turmoil and unrest? Bad cess to 'em, I'm going to bed," she ended abruptly.

"Good-night, Boy-Girl-Woman."

When her light was out he spoke through the open window: "Why don't you want to be intimate with me?"

"Oh, I think it's more interesting not to be," she answered.

"Do you think our present relations are interesting?"

"Rather," she answered sleepily.

They rarely came to the cabin after this except for supplies and fresh clothes. Day after day they spent in the saddle up on the heights. Bill found them

insatiable, they gave him no rest. Barbara was introduced to a trout line and a mountain brook trout of her own catching. After that she insisted on visiting all the streams for miles around, where trout were to be found.

"Talk about a taste for whiskey, it's nothing to a taste for trout," said Bob.

"More exclusive, too," Paul added. "You can get whiskey on every corner in New York, but real fresh mountain trout you travel for."

"And work for, and suffer after!"

The usual plan was to break camp early. Paul and Barbara would fish upstream, while Bill led the ponies and met them at an appointed place to eat the catch. In her hip boots, with her basket on her shoulder, Bob waded the swift-running streams, or stood on the rocks above, the sun bright, the air like a new life fluid, time measured only by an ever-pursuing appetite. Long talks with Paul at night, under the stars, hours of silence, save for a word now and then to her pony, sleep in the open, with a plunge in an ice pool at dawn. Life was reduced to the lowest common denominator, the natural companionship of man, woman, and nature.

"How do you suppose we ever wandered so far away from the real things?" she asked him one day.

"What do you count the real things?" curiously.

"Life in the open; simple relations of people."

"Is Bill your highest ideal of man? By that definition he has the things that count."

"He's happier than either of us."

"Happy nothing! He's contented—tight in the only rut he knows. His mind is as active as rutebaga." She laughed at the homely word, but he went on with the idea. "Do you think he thrills at your mountains—sings rude hymns to your sunsets? Not he. The mountains are made for tourists, tourists are made for guides. As for sunset, well, that means time to sleep."

"Oh, Paul," she protested.

"It's true. Your 'plain man of the soil' is a hero only in novels. In real life he is apt to be a grub."

"I'd rather be a grub than a Broadway Johnny."

"Oh, let's talk about a man," he suggested, smiling.

"But where will you find him?"

"Somewhere between your two extremes. A man's sensibilities have to be opened to nature by training, as his mind is to books. You said it yourself, 'he's got to use all of himself.'"

In all their days of closest intercourse, there was no hint of sentiment. They were two good chums, off holiday making, that was all. What might come later, what was to be their ultimate relation, this sufficed for now. They both unconsciously protected this interim, this breathing space, before they faced a possible upheaval in their lives.

The day was fair and the trout biting well. Barbara stood on a rock while Paul cast in midstream below her. All at once her line went taut and she began to play her fish. Nearer and nearer the edge of the high rock he drew her, more and more excited she became with the struggle. All at once Paul heard a mighty splash, and strode to the rescue. She sat shoulder deep in the swift stream, as she had fallen, but with grim determination she played her fish!

"Take my line while I get up!" she ordered, transferring it.

"Are you hurt?" he asked.

"No, I sat down for the fun of it, Mister!" she snapped, as she got to her feet. "Give me that!" He grinned and resigned her rod to her and watched her land her antagonist.

"There," said she, plumping him into Paul's basket. "He was a good fighter and a diplomat. He thought if he drowned me I'd let go."

"He was a poor judge of character," Paul remarked.

"Gee! I'm wet!" she exclaimed.

"Naturally—you swam after him. I thought you were drowned when I heard the splash. We'd better follow Bill to camp and get you dried out."

"Oh, no, not with them biting a mile a minute," she protested.

"But you're wet to the skin."

"I won't melt."

"This isn't the last day of the world, you know. Have you got dry clothes in your kit?"

"Shirt, but no breeches."

"Bill will have to make a fire and hang you on the line."

"I'll go, but you stay on. I'll come back when I'm dry."

"Sure you can find the way alone?"

She made a face at him. As she waded for the bank she addressed the fish that sped by her: "Go over and bite him!" Slopping water at every step she started for camp. When she saw he was watching her, she threw a shower of drops with a quick turn of her body.

"Automatic fire extinguisher!" she called back. His laugh answered her.

"That man has a nice laugh," she confided to the woods.

Bill received her with whoops of joy, and set to work to dry her out.

"You know how to make people very comfortable, Bill. Are you married?" she asked him.

"Not jest now."

"Does that mean that you have been or you're going to be?"

"I had a wife fer a while, but she lit out with a logger thet played the fiddle."

"Well, did you just let her go?"

"Sure, she was gone when I heard 'bout it."

"That was tough," she commiserated him.

"Oh, I don't know. She didn't like it on a ranch. I got her in a mining camp, so natcherlly she thought it was slow out here. She was used to a shootin' or two on Sat'day nights."

"Think of not liking it here!"

"Wa'al, my likin' ain't your likin', ye know; no two the same. If I cud have played the fiddle, an ef I'd a had a hellofa temper, I might a kep' her. But there ye are."

"You don't know where she is?"

"Nope."

"You don't miss her?"

"Not so's ye'd notice."

"You didn't have any children?"

"Nope. Now let's talk about somethin' cheerful, like a lynchin'."

She begged for a tale of his gold-mining days. He was usually a silent man, but once or twice over the fire at night they had succeeded in unlocking his lips, and from that time on his colourful cowboy language had delighted Barbara. At first he had been a little shy of her, but now they were fast friends. He always mentioned her to Trent as "the little feller," and he admitted that "she was the best all-round woman exhibit he ever saw."

He had just reached the climax of his adventure when Paul came into camp. Barbara, wrapped in a blanket, sat beside the fire, while her clothes hung on the line behind her. Her face was alive with response to Bill's oratory.

"I grabbed him round the middle, an' I swang him over my head, an' I sot him down so hard it jarred his ancestors," said he. Barbara's laugh greeted the phrase and Paul stalked in on them.

"How is the little feller?" he asked.

"He has to stay in a barrel till his duds dries out," said Bill. "He furgot to hang his clothes on the hickory-nut limb."

"I've had the time of my life, listening to Bill. He knows more good stories than anybody in the world."

"Listen at her! She's stringin' ye, Mr. Trent." He strode off to take in the clothes, big with pride.

"Think you'll take cold?" asked Paul.

"Cold? The only way a cold could get me would be to bite me. I'm the wellest

thing on earth."

"Broadway won't know you, you're so brown," he commented, looking down at her.

"Broadway? What's that?"

"A state of mind," he laughed.

The days slid by with incredible swiftness. They extended their holiday twice to please Bill, who insisted on some special expeditions. A descent upon the cabin in the valley found a pile of mail awaiting them.

"Shall we burn it without opening it?" Trent asked her.

"And never go back?" she challenged him.

"And never go back," he answered gravely.

"Your proposition interests me," she said to lessen the tension. "This is a call to rehearsal." She held up the envelope.

"And this is a summons from my party leaders," he remarked, matching her envelope with his.

"What do you say, Barbara? Work or bolt?"

She looked at him steadily for a long moment, then slit her envelope. He lifted his eyebrows slightly and began on his letters.

"My call is for Monday. When is yours?" she said presently.

"Mine is urgent, but Monday in New York is soon enough. That means we must leave here Friday morning."

"This is Tuesday night. Let's go up once more, and come down Thursday night. We can pack in an hour. Let's say good-bye to it, up there."

"Good-bye to what?"

"To the mountains."

So it was arranged, and they set out on their last climb. The weather was uncertain but Bob would hear of no postponement.

"It seems as if we had always spent our days like this, as if we always would," she said as they rode.

"But you wouldn't like that."

"Probably not."

As the day wore on and they went higher with each mile, clouds began to gather, and thunder rumbled far away, then nearer.

"Goin' to git a storm," said Bill.

"Good! That's the one big thing we haven't had in the way of experience," Bob answered.

"Yer goin' to git it."

"How far are we from shelter, Bill?" Trent asked.

"There's a loggin' shack 'bout five miles up. We'd better jog along and git to it, fer when this here thing busts it's goin' to rip snort."

They pushed the ponies into a trot on all the level spots, and they scrambled up the steep grades, as if they, too, sensed danger. The clouds grew blacker and blacker.

"Those clouds bubble out of a huge cauldron," Bob said. Lightning began to crack across the sky, like fiery lashes of a whip. Bob reined up to watch.

"Come on, Bob, hurry!" ordered Trent. "This is no stage storm, it's the real thing."

The wind began to rise in intermittent gusts at first, then steadier, stronger, as if loosed from all restraint. The aspen trees and the ash bent to the earth in graceful salutations which fascinated Bob. A big tree trunk snapped somewhere, and they heard it fall with a noise like a groan.

"Hurry up, folks, it's after us!" shouted Bill.

Barbara answered with a shout of excitement and pleasure. They put their ponies to the run, sparing them neither for climb nor descent. The mountains seemed to rock about them; the noise of wind and thunder made speech impossible, little whirlwinds of dust and loose earth and stones enveloped them. Down below the valley was a black abyss.

They sighted the shack and made a last frantic scramble for it. As Bill kicked in the door of the cabin the last full fury broke. Trent lifted Barbara off her pony and ran into the house with her. Then the two men tried to shut the door.

"No, no, let it be open! It's wonderful to be a part of it!" cried the girl. She tried to stand in the door, but the wind whirled her aside as if she were a leaf. At her beckoning Paul stood beside her, holding her upright. It was like a war of worlds they looked upon.

"Will the shack stand, Bill?" Paul called to him.

"Can't say. Not if this wind keeps up."

Crash and crack and hurricane of wind. Mountains blurred by distant rain, mountains streaked by lightning flashes. Then came the downpour: the rain deluged, it leapt out of the sky and pierced the earth like javelins. The men got the door closed, and tried to fit an old wash-pan into the window to keep out the torrent. Barbara watched them, so excited she could scarcely contain herself. She would have gone out into it, if they could be induced to let her. Finally the shack was as waterproof as they could make it, with every available thing stuffed round the cracks and the edges.

Bill lit a candle, and Bob sat on the bunk, her feet drawn up under her. It was the one dry spot. They ate crackers and cheese and sardines for supper, with no chance to make a fire.

"It seems trivial to eat, when all that wonder is happening out there," she protested.

"Might as well eat as anything. Can't do nuthin' else," said Bill. "Pesky shame we can't make no coffee."

"But look what *that's* making, Bill!" she cried.

"Makin' a pesky lot of noise," he grumbled.

"The superman," jeered Paul.

Little by little the artillery diminished.

"He's calling them off—the god of war. What's his name?" she said.

"Thor. Weren't you frightened?" he asked curiously.

"No. It was worth all the dull days I've ever spent. I know how to go out now, Paul, if the time comes: up here, in glorious destruction!"

"You queer, uncanny Celt," said he.

Later they opened the door and ventured out. The earth was blotted out in blackness, as of the void before God spoke. They made for a rock a few feet from the cabin, and stood peering off into opaque nothingness. Barbara felt for Paul's hand and clung to it. They stood so for a space of time, silent.

"I'm ready now to go back down. There's nothing more to learn up here. I know His peace and His wrath," she said at last.

"Life seems simpler, somehow—and greater, much greater," he answered her.

II

Monday found them back in New York. As they drove from the station to the hotel they watched the passing panorama in silence.

"It seems a little dwarfed, doesn't it?" Barbara said.

"Yes. New York needs an occasional dose of absence, to keep the perspective true," he answered.

They looked about the hotel living-room with a sense of its strangeness. The maid had everything in order, even to flowers everywhere.

"I can't seem to remember why we clutter up with so many luxuries," Barbara sighed.

"Are you a little sorry that you slit the envelope?" he teased her.

"No. Are you sorry I did it?"

"I had more to leave behind than you did."

She looked her surprise.

"I left the best playmate I ever had, up there in the hills."

"You mean Bill?" impudently.

"I mean the 'little feller'."

"You must ask him to visit you."

"No, he belongs to the hills and a heyday holiday. I doubt if Barbara Garratry, Broadway's darling, would care for that kid."

"I'm partial to nice boys."

"He might be fascinated with you, and make me jealous."

"That is a joke," she laughed. "I had to make a sacrifice, too, you know."

"You mean?"

"I had to exchange a big boy chum for a possible governor, plain garden variety."

"I wonder if that big boy and the little feller will ever play again?"

"'I ain't no pruphut,' as Bill says."

The morrow found them both buckling down to work. Paul went off to his office at nine, and Barbara was due at the theatre an hour later. He stopped at her door a moment before he left.

"I seem to recall a great many truisms about the joy of work!"

"It's flapdoodle," she agreed, "the stuff that dreams are made of."

"No, speeches," he amended.

For a few days they both felt cramped, they shifted the old burden of the day's work uneasily, but routine breaks down resistance in the end, and they fell into step with their tasks. Paul was driven every moment. Their hurried visits were unsatisfactory enough. Bob kept in touch with his plans and movements as well as she could, but her own work was trying. The late heat was exhausting, and rehearsing always tried her soul.

"You act like a balky pony, Barbara Garratry," she scolded herself, "I wish Bill were here to give you a 'good jawin'."

Paul appeared at night about seven, hot, tired, harassed.

"Busy to-night?"

"No."

"What do you say to dinner on a roof garden—a city mountain top?"

"Delighted. Are you speaking to-night?"

"Yes, but not until late."

"May I come?"

"Oh, no, don't. I don't know why I dread so to have you in my audience."

"But I've never heard you speak. Maybe you think I couldn't understand your speeches."

"Or maybe I'm afraid you'll find out how much of them you inspire."

They went to the garden on top of the Biltmore, and secured a table as far from people as possible. They looked off over the roofs, which in the half light took on romantic outlines of mosques and minarets. The twin spires of St. Patrick's were mistily dominating it all, as usual. Lights burst slowly, here, there, then the whole upper way was white with electric radiance.

"This has a certain grandeur, too," Barbara said.

He nodded acquiescence, reading her thought.

"It inspires and stimulates, but it never rests you. I wonder why one's kind is so exhausting?" He indicated the garden, now full to the last seat. The chatter, the raised voices, the whirr of electric fans, they all taxed tired nerves to the snapping point. Barbara caught his weary look.

"Do you use all that force we stored up in the hills?" she asked.

"Of course. It's like a reserve army to a hard-pressed general."

"Let me tell you how I use it. I can plunge into the calm that lies out there in the mountains, just as surely as I stepped into that icy stream the first night we were there. I lie down in it, I drink it, I steep myself in it, and I come out refreshed and renewed. Try it, it's a trick of imagination."

The idea caught and held his attention for several minutes.

"Thanks. I'll try that. You're working very hard, aren't you?"

"Yes. I have to. I can't get interested. I want to go fishing."

"Me, too," he laughed.

"I've had bad news to-day."

He leaned toward her quickly.

"We are to open in Boston."

"No?"

"Yes. I must leave Sunday."

"You don't like Boston? You don't want to go?"

"No, I don't want to go."

"Why?" eagerly.

"Oh, I don't know. I'm more comfortable here."

"Oh!"

"You'll be glad to have me out of the way, while you're so busy."

"On the contrary. I rarely see you, but it is a pleasure to think that you are here."

"Thanks! Boston is suburban; if you could find time to——"

"I may come?"

She nodded.

"I'll find time."

Sunday she left for a month's absence. In a way she was glad to go. She realized that she needed time and solitude to think out several problems that confronted her. First and most important, she wanted to discover just how much of a part Paul Trent had come to play in her days. Removed entirely from the influence of his personality, she intended to free herself from him, look at him, and at herself impersonally.

He had rushed away from a meeting to put her on the train, and his farewell had been as casual as if she were going to Brooklyn for the evening. It had piqued

her a bit. Then angry at herself that she had wanted him anything but casual, she had punished him with an indifference which a more astute student of women would have detected at once as over played.

She sighed over the growing complexity of the situation. Why could it not always be as simple and natural as it had been in the mountains? Monday was too busy for thoughts, rehearsal in the new theatre, getting settled in the new hotel, followed by a first night as climax.

When she arrived at the theatre she found her dressing-room full of Killarney roses, with a telegram from Paul: "Irish roses have to do. I wish I could fill the room with mountain laurel."

She was both touched and pleased. She knew he had taken time and thought from his busy day, and it gave her a thrill of happiness. It was enough to key her performance to a high note of joy which her audience felt at once. She was gladsome youth and daring, and she danced into their hearts, just as she had into the more hospitable affections of Broadway. There was no withstanding her. It was a triumph.

Later when the manager came to her room to congratulate her, she said: "Yes, they liked me, but I'm not going to extend the run."

"Why not, if the money's rolling in?"

"I don't care if it is. I want to get back to New York."

"You Irish are all crazy!" he remarked, with the Hebraic patience of one whose gods are all outraged. "She don't care for money, she likes New York," he mocked her.

Her friends came back in numbers after the play. She was invited to sup, to dine, to play bridge, to take tea. She refused to go anywhere until she was rested after the strain of the first night, and when they had all departed, she hurried into her street clothes. All at once it came to her that there was no need of this rush. Paul would not be pacing the corridor to-night. With a sigh and a sudden acute sense of loneliness, she led the way to the hotel.

As she stopped for her key the clerk told her that New York would call her at midnight. She hurried to her room, her heart beating, and as she opened the door the telephone rang. She flew to it.

"Yes, yes, *Paul*!" she said, and scarcely knew her own voice. "Yes, great success. I was wonderful, thanks to you ... yes, I was so happy about the flowers and the telegram; it sang in my playing. Tell me about your day. What happened?" She listened attentively. "Everything all right, then. Empty?... You mean you miss me? I can't be sorry for that, Playmate."

They talked on for several minutes. When good-nights were said, Bob crossed the room to lay off her cloak, smiling. She caught sight of herself in the mirror.

"Why, Barbara Garratry," she said, staring at herself. "How can you look like that after a Boston opening?" Then she laughed.

Friends absolutely closed in on her after the first few days. She had all she could do to protect herself.

The days were crowded with little things, people and teas. She found herself too restless to work. She could not analyze her state of mind at all. Nothing interested her, people seemed unusually stupid and bromidic, she lost interest in the play she was writing and found the one she was playing a bore. She knew that her health was perfect and she could not make it out.

In her search for something to divert her mind and serve as an escape from over-devoted admirers, she discovered a public municipal bath house, where she could go to swim. Clad in the shapeless blue garment provided by the bath house —Bob called it "the democratic toga"—she would shut her eyes and dive off the spring board, pretending that she was going into the mountain pool in the dark. The strength she had stored up in the hills stood her in good stead for the swimming races. Pauline, as she taught the girls to call her, was always, or nearly always, winner.

Nobody suspected who she was, and she found great amusement in the occasional outburst of some matinee adorer, in regard to the charms of Bob Garratry. She heard marvellous yarns about herself, her unhappy marriage, her large group of children, her many lovers.

"No, I haven't seen the lady," she answered one of them, "but I'll wager I can beat her swimming fifty yards."

"Oh, she wouldn't *swim*!" protested the girl.

"Wouldn't she? Poor sort, then," said "Pauline," trying the Australian Crawl.

"Every night at midnight Paul called her on the 'phone" **"Every night at midnight Paul called her on the 'phone"**

Every night at midnight Paul called her on the 'phone, and this was the one vital hour of her day. He kept her as closely in touch with his campaigning as she had been in New York. In return he demanded news of her doings, her successes, and her friends. He announced that he was to go on a trip through the state, lasting a week, and she lamented to herself that their visits would cease, but he called her just the same from the different towns.

One afternoon she sauntered down the hall to her room, after a series of alleged pleasures, including luncheon and two teas. She was tired and she vowed to herself that this was her last day of killing time. To-morrow she would force herself to work. She opened the door and was halfway across the room before she saw him smiling at her from the hearthrug. Her hand went to her heart swiftly as he came toward her, both hands out.

"Barbara!"

"Paul! But how—when——"

"I ran away! We were in a town where we were to have a meeting. I was to be the main speaker. I don't know what happened to me: I just found myself on a train coming here, and here I am."

He held her two hands and looked at her intently.

"But how long have you been here? Why didn't you let me know?"

"I wanted to surprise you. I've been pacing this room for one hour in punishment."

"Oh, I'm sorry.... You're very thin and overworked, Governor."

"I know it. The strain is over soon now, thank Heaven. But you—it's you I want to hear about; it's you I want to see, and listen to."

He helped her with her coat, placed her chair, and when she was seated, he stood looking at her.

"You think I've changed?" she smiled at him.

"I never can remember how you look. It tantalizes me."

"Oh, didn't I leave you any pictures?"

"Pictures! I don't want any Miss Barbara Garratry advertisements. I know how she looks. It's *you* I can't remember. You've had a big success here. Does it make you happy?"

She shook her head.

"Why not?"

"No fight—too easy. That's one of my troubles: there seems to be so little for me to fight for in my work. Lord! that sounds self-satisfied. I don't mean it that way. I mean that developing as an artist is a peaceful process, rather. The days when I had to fight for my chance, fight for my part, fight the stage manager to let me do it my way, fight the audience to make it like me—oh, those were the days that counted! Daddy and I used to talk things over nights. He was cautious. He'd say: 'Well, ye' lose yer job if you do that,' but when I had done it, he used to laugh and say: 'Bob, son av battle, shure enough'."

Paul laughed.

"The dulness of being successful! There's something in it, Bob."

"Of course there is. Report on your week, sir."

"Well, the boys say it went all right, but I didn't seem to have my heart in it. I've been so restless, so sort of bored with people and things. I can't get down to work. I even find myself thinking of what I am going to say to you over the telephone, right in the middle of a speech, with a big audience out there in front of me."

Barbara laughed.

"I suppose I'm tired. I don't know what else can be the matter with me."

She laughed again.

"What is it that amuses you?"

"Can't I laugh when I'm happy?"

"Are you happy?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because I just found out something."

"What?"

"Secret."

"Tell me?"

"Maybe—some day."

He stared at her again.

"I know," she nodded, "I am a different girl from the one you married. I'm sorry, but it can't be helped."

"If you're happy, you aren't thinking of—you're not wanting to die?"

"Not until you're governor, anyway."

"You always say that, Barbara. It terrifies me. You mean that if I win, you still may——"

She rose and faced him.

"Not to-night. I'll tell you my plans the night you are elected. Come along now, and eat of the sacred codfish."

"You are a little glad to see me?" he asked her.

"Oh, yes. Boston is boring me to death," she evaded him.

"Damn Boston!" was his succinct reply.

III

As Trent's campaign neared its close, Barbara could tell by the weariness in his voice, over the 'phone, just how near he was to the end of his endurance. It fretted her constantly that she had to stay on in Boston, when she might look after him, make it easier for him if only she could be with him. Twice he came to Boston on flying visits, and the last time she almost decided to throw up her engagement and go back with him.

He assured her that her absence was providential, that he could never see her, even if she were in the same hotel, that it was less tantalizing to have her away, than near and far. He never failed to say good-night by long distance. Sometimes the tired little boy note crept into it to disturb her slumbers.

The week of the election arrived with excitement high. No gubernatorial campaign in years had been fought with such tenacity and fierceness. The entire state was lined up in rabid factions. Trent occasionally sent Barbara a package of newspapers from the smaller towns in the state and she read in one of Paul as "the embodiment of youth and courage, the two qualities most needed in the new governor. Full of enthusiasm for reforms that mean greater efficiency in our state government, yet tempered by a calm judgment and the experience which came to him in his brilliant career in the law." Next she read: "Paul Trent is the tool and mouthpiece of rampant reform. Once in the governor's chair, he will prove a dangerous factor to be dealt with by the people when it is too late."

They accused him of every crime in the decalogue, this side of murder—and every virtue. They mentioned his mysterious marriage with a well-known actress as proof of his loose moral standards—as proof of his fine democratic ideas! The whole thing, viewed as a spectacle, made one of the absurd exhibits of our political system.

When Barbara was not raging, perforce, she laughed.

For the first three days of the week before election the New York call came once at one, twice later than that. Three or four meetings a night listened to Trent, and during the day he addressed crowds in the nearby towns. The day before election, at noon, Barbara entered her manager's office with an air of bravado.

"Oh, good-morning. This is an honour," he smiled.

"Wait a minute before you waste that smile! An understudy has got to go on for me to-night and to-morrow night."

"What? Are you sick?"

"No. I'm going to New York on an afternoon train. I'll come back on the midnight train to-morrow."

"You will and you won't. That's a pretty high tone for you to take with me. What about the receipts—what about me—what am I to tell the public? That you don't like Boston, and you went to New York to buy a hat? Nice position you put me

in, with the S. R. O. sign out every night. You think all you've got to do is to come in here, smiling sweetly, and say: 'I'm going to New York this afternoon.'"

"I told you you'd regret that smile! Look here, Wolfson, you can like it or not, just as you please. I'm going to New York to help get my husband elected governor. If you've got the sense God is supposed to have given your race, you'll play it up big in the papers and make capital out of it. There aren't so many actresses married to governors, you know. You've got something exclusive!"

"But he ain't governor!"

"No, but he will be by to-morrow night. By the time you get it into the dear public's head, he will be, and I'll be back here. Get my point?"

"Yes, but you're crazy!"

"Granted—it's grand to be crazy! Give little Marcy a chance at my part; she deserves it. I'm off now. By-by."

"I could break my contract with you for this!"

She turned and came back.

"Suits me perfectly. Let's settle it now. I don't want to come back to-morrow night, just for the trip," she said coolly.

The poor little man was on the prongs of a toasting fork, and he knew it. He paced the floor and sputtered and raged. Bob looked at her watch.

"I don't intend to miss my train. Do I come back or not?"

"Oh, damn it, yes. Now get out."

"You're a most obliging little man, Wolfson, but your temper is unspeakably bad."

She smiled sweetly at him, and tripped out.

All the way on the train she devised new ways of appearing to Trent. He had no least suspicion of her plans, and she intended to make the most of the dramatic possibilities of the situation. Her train did not get her into New York until after six. She knew Paul was to address half a dozen meetings, ending with the biggest of all at Cooper Union. She was not sure that she could find him even if she tried, but she intended to be at Cooper Union to lose herself in the crowd,

and listen to him, watch him fire the last gun of his fight—their fight. Then—well, that would have to take care of itself.

She drove to the hotel and met the cordial, unsurprised greeting of the clerk. Nothing "in heaven or earth beneath" can surprise a New York hotel clerk. She asked about Paul, when he came in, when he dined.

"Lord, Mrs. Trent, I don't know when the man eats or sleeps. I don't think he does much of either."

"How can I find out where he is to speak to-night? He does not know I'm here and I want to surprise him."

"We've got some hand bills here."

"Thanks! I'll be here until to-morrow night."

She went to her own sitting-room which Trent was supposed to use during her absence. She ventured into his rooms, which looked unused and cheerless. She had a bath, dressed with unusual care, dined alone in her room studying Paul's itinerary between bites. Eight meetings announced him as headliner, with Cooper Union as the climax. She shook her head over it; he would be dead of weariness.

At eight o'clock she called a taxi and started to the first meeting. She could not get within a block of the place. She tried the next and the next with the same results, so she ordered the driver to Cooper Union, hoping to beat the crowd there, as Paul was not announced until late.

She paid her man and joined the mass of people wedged into a solid block of resistance before the building.

"Is the hall full?" she asked the policeman.

"Full? Sure, it's been full since six o'clock, Ma'am."

"What's the attraction?"

"Paul Trent, the nixt governor, is speakin' here to-night."

"He must be popular."

"Sure he's popular. He's got the right dope, that feller. He's the people's ch'ice, all roight, all roight."

"I couldn't possibly get in there, could I?"

"The governor's wife couldn't git in. If ye had a platform ticket ye might get in there."

"How do I get to the platform door?"

"I'll get ye through. Have yer ticket ready."

He pushed and beat a way for her to the stage door, which was guarded by a fellow officer.

"Tickut, lady?" he demanded.

"I want to see Mr. John Kent."

"He's Trent's manager. He's with him at the other meetings."

"Who has this meeting in charge?"

"If ye haven't got yer tickut, it's no use," he said, inspecting her suspiciously.

"The idea of one Irishman sayin' no use to another," she laughed.

"Are ye Irish?"

"Phwat's the matter with yer eyes, man?"

He grinned.

"Give me your pencil."

He obeyed. She wrote on her card and handed it to him. "You get that to the chairman of the meeting."

He read it deliberately.

"Fer the love av the green!" said he. "'Tis yersilf. I seen ye at the Comedy Theatre onct. Well, well!"

The chairman himself hurried to the door to meet her in reply to the summons.

"Miss Garratry— I should say, Mrs. Trent, this is a pleasure."

"I'd no idea I had to have a passport to hear my own husband speak."

He led her in.

"Let me sit back where no one will see me, please. Mr. Trent has no idea I am in town. I'd rather he didn't see me until after his speech."

The chairman nodded, but he was much too astute a stage manager to let this opportunity pass. They stood at the back of the stage until the speaker finished, and then with an air he led Barbara down the very middle of the stage to a seat in the front row.

"So sorry," he said, "the back seats are all full."

Then he took the stage and introduced the next speaker, smiling at Barbara in such a way that every eye in the great mob was fixed upon her. The speaker began the regulation political speech, and Bob gave herself up to an excited study of the house, black with people to the very dome. She was too well versed in audiences not to feel its quality.

In the meantime Paul was making slow progress from one meeting to the next. In the cab between stops he tried the mechanical transposition of himself into the mountains, according to Bob's suggestion. He must find some way to rest his tired brain. He pretended that he was sitting in the theatre in Boston watching Bob's play; he repeated the midnight walk they once took up the avenue. He wished he might ask her advice about the speech at Cooper Union. It would count a good deal, and her experienced knowledge of the psychology of audiences had helped him out many times before. She would know just the most effective thought to leave in the minds of the men who were to answer him at the polls to-morrow.

For the first time he felt the need of her, not as brain or partner, but just as woman and wife. He wanted to put his tired head down on her shoulder and feel her cheek on his hair, her tenderness about him. He roused himself with a start.

"What meeting is this, John?"

"Eighth. Twenty-fifth ward."

"Cooper Union after this!"

"Yes. It's eleven now; we ought to make it by eleven-thirty."

"Bother. We won't get through before one," said Paul, thinking of the long

distance call to Boston.

Back at Cooper Union the speaker sawed the air, and yelled himself hoarse, in the approved political speaking style of the old school. The crowd was bored with him. They kept up their enthusiasm by yelling, just to keep awake. When the orator sat down, some man in the audience leapt to his feet.

"Mr. Chairman," he shouted, "let Bob speak. She can tell the truth about Paul Trent—she's married to him."

In a flash the house had grasped the idea.

"We want the Governor's lady! We want the Governor's lady!" they chanted. The place was a roar of sound. Bob's heart clamped tight with terror. She turned a white face to the chairman, who stood with raised hand, trying to quiet them. It was like pushing back the waves of the sea, the sound surged higher and more tempestuous. Into Bob's atrophied mind pierced the thought that this was her chance to help Paul, that she could play her own popularity to forward his cause, if she had the nerve.

She had never made a speech in her life. She was trained in an art which makes no extemporaneous demand on the artist. Everything is set, prepared for, rehearsed. This all made the background of her mind, as she rose and nodded to the astonished chairman. Then as she walked to the speaker's desk and faced them, her fear fell away. There were the same old adoring faces she was used to. They were just human beings, not a jury to try her. She waived the chairman aside, when he tried in vain to introduce her. The crowd indulged in what might be termed "a mob fit."

They yelled, deepening waves of sound; they stood up and waved handbills, with a crackling like flames; they stomped with their boots and whistled on their fingers. Bob watched and listened a moment, then her clear laugh rang out above the roar. She held up her hand and absolute quiet fell on them, as if a lid had been shut down on a bubbling pot.

"Boys and girls, do be still!" called Bob. "I can't talk to a Roman mob like you, unless you're quiet. I'm scared to death as it is. I never made a speech before, and maybe I'm not going to make one now!

"I've been to political meetings before. I'm Irish, so that goes without saying. My father used to say that if I'd been a man I'd have been a policeman. Ye know they

call me Bob, son av Battle."

"I bet you would, too. I'd vote for ye! Maybe you suffragettes will make it yet," the crowd interrupted her.

"Are you making this speech or am I?" she called to them.

"Shut up! Let her alone! Tell us what kind of a guy Trent is!" they called.

"What I started to say, when I was so rudely interrupted, was this: I'm more interested in this political meeting than any I ever went to, because I'm more interested in the candidate for governor, and I want every man in this audience to vote for Paul Trent to-morrow on my say so."

They expressed themselves on that point in the usual vocal way. Bob reached for the chairman's gavel, with a "Give me that thing!" which made them all laugh. She beat the desk until there was silence.

"I think a man who is courteous, high minded, unselfish, and dependable in his relations with women is the kind of man to be dependable in his political relations. When Paul Trent says a thing is so, you can bank on its being so. If you send him to Albany to run this state, he'll run it. The politicians can't boss him, you can't boss him, and I can't boss him—(laughter)—but he'll do his conscientious best to run it right. You send him up there and see!"

She smiled and nodded at them as she turned to take her seat; the crowd's sudden shout of welcome made her turn quickly. Paul was coming toward her. The look in his eyes held her so that she forgot the crowd, which was going into convulsions out in front.

"My dear!" Paul said to her softly, taking her hand. She smiled up at him, turned back to the crowd in front, and with her hand still in his silenced them with a gesture. They scented a situation.

"Friends," Paul began.

"Save yer breath, Guv'nor, the Missus said it all," yelled a voice from the crowd. Everybody laughed.

"Friends," Paul repeated, smiling, "I shall not try to improve on the Missus. If when you go to the polls to-morrow you think it is for the good of the State of New York that I should try to direct its government for two years, vote for me,

and I'll thank the Missus. Mind you, I don't promise any miracles, but as far as any honest man can see what's right, I'll do it. Good-night to you."

"Bob and Paul stood bowing and smiling" **"Bob and Paul stood bowing and smiling"**

Cooper Union has seen some exhibitions of excitement, but this was a prize example. Bob and Paul stood for ten minutes, hand in hand, bowing and smiling, before the crowd began to break up. Then the mob on the platform surrounded them, and it was half an hour before they made their escape. At the door Paul said to her:

"I've got to meet my committee for half an hour, dearest. Will you go to the hotel and wait for me? I'll come as soon as I can."

She nodded, and he put her into a cab at the door. The hour she waited for him seemed ten minutes, for she went over every step of their time together from the first day. He burst open the door at last, and came toward her, his face alight, his arms out, his whole need of her in his eyes. She put her two hands on his breast and held him away from her.

"Paul, not one word to-night. No extra strain, no excitement. I want you to go to bed, now, at once. I shall be here until after the returns to-morrow night. Then we'll talk. Please, dear," she added softly, at the protest in his eyes. He bent and kissed her fingers.

"I don't know how you're here, but it's wonderful," he said, and left her.

The next day she scarcely saw him. She spent the time at the telephone or buying extras. All day long she busied herself with this, that, and the other thing, to keep her nerves in order. At seven Paul telephoned that he could not come to dine with her, but that he hoped to be back by ten. She forced herself to go to a nearby theatre to put in the early evening, but the only part of the entertainment that interested her was the election returns announced between the acts.

Back at the hotel at ten, but no Paul. She packed her bag, and sent out for two tickets on the midnight train to Boston. At half-past ten he came, worn to a shred.

"Well?" she cried, as he stood on the threshold.

"We've won, Barbara. It seems to be a landslide."

He came and stood before her.

"Are you glad?"

"Glad? Governor, aren't you?"

"I suppose so. It seems unimportant somehow. I want something else so much more."

"What?"

"You—your love. I want to put my arms around you, I want to put my head down on your hair, and know that you're safe in my heart."

"Lock me away there, Governor, that's my home," she whispered, and was in his arms.

"Barbara, beloved, you don't want to go away from earth now?" he asked her, after long but pregnant silences. She lifted her head and kissed him gently.

"Dear heart," said she with a sigh, "I want to live to be a hundred and ten."

THE END

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